

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm

November 9, 2006

Hello, this is Governor Jennifer Granholm.

Veterans Day really started out as a day to honor the end of the First World War. It wasn't until years later that Congress changed the name of Armistice Day to Veterans Day, to honor the veterans who served in both World Wars.

When President Eisenhower signed the law changing the name of November 11 to Veterans Day, he said the country should both honor veterans and work for an enduring peace.

On Veterans Day we recall the sacrifices made by our veterans of wars past, but also of the war we are fighting today in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To date, more than 100 Michigan soldiers have lost their lives in Iraq War. I have made more than 100 difficult phone calls to the families of those soldiers to offer my condolences, not only on my behalf, but on the behalf of 10 million Michigan citizens who are humbled by their service and their sacrifice.

It is estimated that more than 788,000 veterans live in our state. They are the men in their late 70s and 80s who were young and carefree on December 6, 1941, but saw their world completely change the next day.

They are the men who were too young to serve in the Second World War, but who went to defend the world from communism in the Korean Conflict in the 1950s.

They are the men and women who came of age in one of the most turbulent times in our country, and went off to fight our most unpopular war.

And they are today, the men and women who serve in Iraq and Afghanistan, some of whom I had the privilege to visit with on a special trip to the Middle East to celebrate Thanksgiving with our troops.

These are the men and women we honor today, and we should remember their sacrifices every day because we are free and live in a democratic society thanks to them.

Charles Province, a U.S. Army veteran, wrote the following verse which I think sums up the debt we owe our veterans:

It is the Soldier, not the minister
Who has given us freedom of religion.

It is the Soldier, not the reporter
Who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the Soldier, not the poet
Who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the Soldier, not the campus organizer
Who has given us freedom to protest.

It is the Soldier, not the lawyer
Who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the Soldier, not the politician
Who has given us the right to vote.

It is the Soldier who salutes the flag,
Who serves beneath the flag,
And whose coffin is draped by the flag,
Who allows the protester to burn the flag.

On Veterans Day, please honor the sacrifice of our veterans. Please fly your flag proudly and remember the men and women who have bravely defended your right to do so.